COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

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COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year. This issue covers the months of March and April 2006.

Universities committed to enhancing quality and productivity, report shows

In 2005, COU established the Quality and Productivity Task Force to examine initiatives that Ontario universities are undertaking to improve the quality and productivity of university education, taking into account initiatives adopted by the provincial government, Ontario's health sector and university sectors around the world. In March 2006, after six months of review, the Task Force released its findings in the report, *Quality and Productivity in Ontario Universities: Initiatives, Conclusions and Recommendations.*

The report identifies a number of ways in which universities demonstrate their commitment to quality and productivity and use public funds to arrive at the best possible outcome for students, taxpayers and the province – thereby making a noticeable difference to student success and knowledge advancement. It notes that the strategy needed by the university sector to maintain the momentum on these fronts bears great similarity to the approach adopted within the Ontario government and in other jurisdictions. The report concludes with a series of recommendations intended primarily to improve student engagement and re-direct resources to the front-line delivery of education and student services.

The Task Force, chaired by Dr. Vivek Goel, Vice-President and Provost, University of Toronto, was made up of senior representatives from Ontario's 18 universities and the Ontario College of Art & Design, who also presented their respective institution's initiatives to enhance quality and productivity at their campuses. For a copy of the report, visit COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca).

Task Force to recommend metrics for quality improvements at universities

On the heels of the recently concluded work of the Quality and Productivity Task Force, COU has taken the next step in responding to the government's "results challenge" by creating the Task Force on Quality Measurement to recommend the most practical metrics for assessing the quality of higher education at the institutional and sector level.

Chaired by Dr. David Naylor, President of the University of Toronto, the Task Force will build upon the work of the university members of a working group chaired by Dr. Paul Davenport, President of the University of Western Ontario, which prepared a preliminary set of results measures that COU proposed to government in October 2005.

The new Task Force, which held its first meeting at the end of March 2006, will tackle the broad issues related to quality measurement that will help shape COU's work with government and the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO). Task Force members include Dr. Davenport; Sheldon Levy, President, Ryerson University; Bonnie Patterson, President, Trent University; Dr. Judith Woodsworth, President, Laurentian University; Dr. Ken Norrie, Provost and Vice-President Academic, McMaster University; and Dr. Marilyn Rose, Dean, Graduate Studies, Brock University.

New DM at Training, Colleges and Universities

Effective March 1, 2006, Dr. Philip Steenkamp, former Deputy Minister of Strategic Policy and Social Development in the Office of the Premier for the Government of British Columbia, has been named the new Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Dr. Steenkamp has extensive experience in education and related issues at the deputy ministerial level in the B.C. government, having been responsible for Advanced Education, the Treaty Negotiations Office in the Ministry of the Attorney General, and Aboriginal Affairs. Getting off to a quick start in the Ontario postsecondary sector, Dr. Steenkamp met with Executive Heads of Ontario universities on March 10 and co-chaired the joint university-government Working Group on University Capacity on March 24.

Reaching Higher goals a challenge without additional resources

The 2005 budget provided substantial increases in investment in postsecondary education as part of the five-year *Reaching Higher* plan, reflecting Premier McGuinty's commitment to ensuring access and quality in postsecondary education in the province. Enrolment at Ontario universities, though, has been increasing faster than the government had projected in the 2005 budget. While the reality of more students means greater access – and that's welcome news – without additional investment, the higher-than-anticipated numbers also mean more demands on universities' already constrained resources.

On March 8, 2006, the Ontario government announced the details of its multi-year tuition policy framework: universities are allowed to increase tuition for first-year students by up to 4.5% in most programs and up to 8% in the first year of professional and graduate programs; and once students are in their programs, subsequent annual increases are limited to 4%.

The government's 2006 budget on March 23 featured several new initiatives to support research, including funding for the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo and for the University of Waterloo's Institute of Quantum Computing; three award programs recognizing new research and innovation talent; awards promoting excellence in medical research; support for the development of Phase II of the MaRS Discovery District; new money to accelerate commercialization and the growth of innovative start-ups; and support for Laurentian University's new Centre for Excellence in Mining in Sudbury. The budget contained no measures in operating funds to accommodate the unexpected enrolment growth.

The resources available from the 2005 and 2006 provincial budgets, combined with the tuition revenues made possible from the tuition framework announcement in March, are not sufficient to keep pace with the estimated 4.6% university inflation. Without additional funds, there would be a decline in the inflation adjusted resources per student over the five-year period of the *Reaching Higher* plan, and this would leave Ontario still near last place among provinces in per-student funding for universities. (The table on the opposite page shows the impact of the 2005 budget and the 2006 tuition fee announcement on the total operating revenues that universities can expect to receive over the 2005-06 to 2009-10 period.)

COU looks forward to working with and supporting the provincial government in its determination to secure at least an additional $750 million for higher education to realize the shared goals of access and quality in the *Reaching Higher* time frame, as set out in the Budget Papers commentary on federal transfer payments.

Financial Implications of the *Reaching Higher* Plan					
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Additional PSE Funding ($m)	447	736[4]	932	958	1,156
University share[1] ($m)	282	523	689	708	862
Annual Increment	282	241	166	19	154
Total Grant ($m)	2,631	2,872	3,038	3,057	3,211
% Increase	*12.0%*	*9.2%*	*5.8%*	*0.6%*	*5.0%*
Total Fees[2] ($m)	2,286	2,451	2,572	2,756	2,962
% Increase	*4.1%*	*7.2%*	*4.9%*	*7.2%*	*7.5%*
Grant per BIU[3] ($)	4,316	4,537	4,716	4,598	4,667
% Increase	*6.8%*	*5.1%*	*3.9%*	*-2.5%*	*1.5%*
Fees per BIU ($)	3,749	3,872	3,992	4,145	4,305
% Increase	*-0.8%*	*3.3%*	*3.1%*	*3.9%*	*3.8%*
Grant + Fees per BIU ($)	8,065	8,409	8,707	8,744	8,972
% Increase	*3.1%*	*4.3%*	*3.5%*	*0.4%*	*2.6%*
Adjusted for 4.6% annual inflation ($)	7,711	7,667	7,558	7,218	7,048
% Decrease	*-1.4%*	*-0.3%*	*-1.1%*	*-4.0%*	*-1.9%*

NOTES

[1] For 2005-06, the additional grant allocation information has been provided by MTCU. For all other years, the university share of the additional PSE funding is derived by assuming that universities, after receiving the sector's funds allocated for graduate and medical education, receive two-thirds of the remaining PSE funds.

[2] Assumes 4.5% per year in average tuition per student plus enrolment growth.

[3] For each level, every program is assigned a Basic Income Unit (BIU) weight that approximates its relative cost to run. For example, a first-year undergraduate arts and science program has a BIU weight of 1, while most medical programs have a BIU weight of 5 and PhD programs an annual weight of 6. The sum of the BIU weight times the number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) enrolments for each level and program equals an institution's total number of BIUs. The underlying BIU projections are derived from undergraduate trends calculated by the CUPA CESFA model (which forecasts 9.8% growth from 2004-05 to 2009-10) and MTCU graduate expansion plans (14,000 more spaces by 2009-10).

[4] This figure is as reflected in the 2006 budget documents.

Evaluation of collaborative baccalaureate nursing programs underway

The College-University Consortium Council (CUCC), assisted by a steering committee made up of representatives from the colleges, universities and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, has contracted with Cathexis Consulting Inc. to evaluate all of Ontario's collaborative baccalaureate nursing programs, which involve 22 college and 12 university partners in the province.

The purpose of the evaluation is to identify best practices in the design and delivery of collaborative nursing education, focusing on the system-wide collaboration between the sectors. The information will help guide not only existing college-university partnerships but also future ones. It will also assist the government in developing policy and planning for future joint activity. The evaluation will include interviews with administrators and faculty, as well as a survey of students to assess their experience.

The results of the evaluation will be detailed in a report slated for November 2006. CUCC was set up by government to promote and co-ordinate joint education and training ventures at Ontario's colleges and universities. For more information, contact Liz MacLennan, at 416-979-2165 ext. 219.

A fond farewell to a senior member of the COU Secretariat

On March 14, 2006, Arnice Cadieux left her position as Executive Director of Public Affairs at the COU Secretariat. Arnice has had an exceptionally accomplished career in the university community, having served at Council for the past 10 years and, before that, at Ryerson University for 23 years. At Council, she managed all aspects of the public relations functions and sat on numerous committees, including COU's Standing Committee on Government and Community Relations and the Ontario Universities' Public Affairs Council. Time and again, Arnice has demonstrated her integrity, commitment and breadth of talent. She will be fondly remembered by all of us who have worked with her over the years.

Two financial reports on Ontario universities recently published

COU recently produced, under the auspices of the Council of Finance Officers - Universities of Ontario (COFO-UO), the following yearly updates of financial information on Ontario universities:

- Financial Report of Ontario Universities 2004-05, Volume I - Universities;
- Financial Report of Ontario Universities 2004-05, Volume II - Affiliated and Federated Colleges and Universities.

Upcoming conferences in May and June

- From May 1 to May 2, 2006, the Council of Senior Administrative Officers (CSAO) is holding its spring meeting at the University of Windsor. Invited guest speakers include representatives from the university and government sectors.

- From June 14 to 16, 2006, the Council on University Planning and Analysis (CUPA) is hosting its annual conference at Wilfrid Laurier University. Distinguished professionals from academia, business and government will speak on topics ranging from quality and productivity in higher education, to international quality assurances, to practical applications of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data.

- From June 17 to 20, 2006, the Canadian Association of University Business Officers (CAUBO) is hosting its annual conference at the Université de Montréal. This year's theme is "In Tune with the World" and the international tone to the CAUBO conference is reflected in its diversity of guest speakers representing the university, business, government and artistic communities.

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